Assignment 5\_1: Search Engine Comparison

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Sample research question (relevant to the selected tools!): **How do images aid our understanding of a historical event?**

For sample task: **Find five engaging images related to the American Civil War and explain why you chose those particular images and how they are important in understanding the American Civil War.**

Query/queries used search syntax, keywords, phrases: American Civil War and U.S. Civil War

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| **Image Search Engines** | **Tool #1**  **PicFog**  http://picfog.com | **Tool #2**  **BestPicturesOf**  http://en.bestpicturesof.com | **Tool #3**  **Picsearch**  http://www.picsearch.com |
| Describe the interface | * Displays images from Twitter * Search box with options for narrowing by keyword, location (cities) or twitter user. * Simple, uncluttered * Ad space at bottom, some unused. | * Combines image search results from Google, bing, Shutterstock and Picasa. * Search box, no suggestions as you type. * Popular Queries section below search box with four images displayed with topic. * Red, white and blue basic colors * Options to recommend on Google+ or like on Facebook, send link. * Ad on bottom of page. | * Search box with suggestions only from your personal search history. * Four images are displayed below the search box with titles. Assumed to be popular searches you can click on. * Language option * Links to company info. |
| How are results returned? | * Shows images in box form in a new page. * If you scroll over image you see the tweet associated with the image. * Shows how long ago the images were tweeted in the upper left corner. * Search box displayed on the left so that you can refine your search if needed. * Options to save, share on Facebook, or tweet the images. | * Results displayed below original interface on same page. * Shows eight results each from Google, bing and Picasa – separated by an ad and a line across page. * Displays image with title, file type and image size, and original website address below the image. | * Displays image with image size, file size, file type and original website address below the image. * 30 results per page. * Advertisements on page * Options for refining search – see below. |
| Special features | * Very fresh content, due to Twitter. * Click a box to follow @picfog on Twitter. * Click on pic to enlarge it and get instant links to reposting, following tweeter, etc. on Twitter and also to share on Facebook. | * Click on the image and it will take you to a new, split page, with image and original website content on the bottom and details about the image and options for liking the image on Facebook or Google+ on top. | * Image directory * Options for refining search results include narrowing by color, size, type, and image orientation. |
| # of hits and relevance to research question | * 11 images American Civil War - Pic of flowers at the American Civil War Center - so anything with American Civil War, even if unrelated to our search, can show up. * 6 images on U.S. Civil War – mostly on Syria with #civil, #war in tweets. Only one related to the actual U.S. Civil War. | * # of hits not directly stated, would have to count pages. * Several pages from Google and Picasa. * Only one page of results from bing. It was a little weird that only eight results were returned from bing. I searched on bing Images and got 1,880,000 results. * Picasa was mostly people’s photos of Civil War sites, not old photos. So that one not very relevant. * Google had a lot of results, but could have just used Google Images search. | * 2,239,589 American Civil War * 2,236,968 U.S. Civil War * Nice variety, many relevant image results |
| Pros | * Some unusual pics. One I had never seen before in Civil War photos/images. | * Eight results only per page per search engine = less clutter. * Image details included and a title | * Variety of images * Options for refining results |
| Cons | * Not much info or text beyond the images. Wanted to click for more info, but there was not much there to read, follow, or learn. * Unfiltered so students may come upon something inappropriate. * Hard to find source info. for the image – would have to tweet the person in some instances to ask if not from a website. * Small # of results. | * See comments on # of hits and relevance. * Shutterstock and Picasa are just photo sharing sites from bing and Google. | * Ads could be distracting, especially large one on right side of page. Ex: Kiss CD ad by Amazon.com. * No titles or descriptions for images. Have to click on the link to the original website for any descriptive info. |
| Would you recommend this search tool? In what situation? | Would not recommend for this type of project. It would not be efficient. May recommend it for a current events task as the oldest image tweet was 6 days ago, newest being only 19 hours old, and that was American Civil War – a 19th century topic. Relevance is hit or miss, but worth a quick check. If images are fair use, some could be shared with students. | Probably not because of the issue with bing, although maybe it is temporary. If so, I maybe would use it because it separates the results so clearly. I would just use Google and bing separately otherwise. | Being just image search engines, this one probably tops the other two we compared. The lack of titles is a concern but the refining options are pretty cool and a click onto the original website should provide more info. about the image, including title. |

The overall consensus is that search engines whose sole purpose is to search images may not be up to par with other sites that offer image searches in addition to other types of searches like Google, bing, and especially historical sites like American Memory. It all comes down to personal preference in the end, when comparing apples to apples, even between partners. So I guess that supports curation and variety!